391
75¢
CAN 95¢
U.K 35p
JAN. 86
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

BAT MAN

DEATH COMES AS THE END!

1935

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1985

MANDRAKE

ATOP A TOWER ISOLATED BY EARTHQUAKE AND AVALANCHE, NOCTURNA WAITS ALONE IN HER OBSERVATORY FOR THE END.

STATIONED AT THE CRAGGY BASE OF THE COLUMN AROUND WHICH SWIRLS THE FLOODING RIVER, ROBIN HAS COME TO PROTECT HIS ERSTWHILE "MOTHER".

HE IS ABOUT TO FAIL.

DEATH, BOY!

NIGHT-SLAYER!!

I'VE BROUGHT DEATH FOR NOCTURNA--AND YOU'RE IN MY WAY!

AND STILL THE SCARLET STORM HOWLS, LIKE THE VOICE OF MAD, UNCARING DOOM.

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G-2225

BATMAN 391 (USPS 045-340). Published monthly by DC Comics Inc., 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10103. Second class postage paid at New York, NY and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to BATMAN, DC Comics Inc., Subscription Dept., P.O. Box 1308-F, Fort Lee, NJ 07024. Annual subscription rate $9.00. Outside U.S.A. $11.00 in U.S. funds. Copyright © 1985 DC Comics Inc. All Rights Reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. All characters featured in this issue and the distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks of DC Comics Inc. Advertising Representative: Sanford Schwarz & Co., 355 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017, (212) 391-1400. Printed in U.S.A.
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INDEED, BOY-- YOU'RE ONE OF THOSE WHO STOLE NOCTURNA'S LOVE FROM ME!

--UHN!!

HWAK

KLINK

I DON'T BELIEVE IT! HIT HIM WITH MY BEST SHOT AND HE'S NOT EVEN BUDGE--

YOU'RE ONE OF THOSE WHO MADE HER BETRAY ME--

--AND THE PRICE OF HER BETRAYAL IS BLOOD!

GREEDILY, AND TINGED PINK BY RED RAINS, THE FLOODWATERS RISE.

THE HOSPITAL!

IT'S ALMOST FUNNY, REALLY. AND PERHAPS SUMS UP OUR ENTIRE RELATIONSHIP.

WHEN THE POLICE BLAMED *ME* FOR THE MURDERS OF ALL THOSE FALSE FACE SOCIETY THUGS, I SIMPLY WANTED TO *CLEAR* MYSELF...

HOW COULD I KNOW THAT *NIGHT-SLAYER* WAS COMMITTING THE MURDERS TO GET AT *NOCTURNA*... OR THAT YOU *LOVE* NOCTURNA?

I'M TRYING TO TELL YOU I *MIGHT* HAVE LOVED HER, SELINA -- IF NOT FOR HER USE OF A BOY NAMED JASON TODD

HER STRANGE ALLURE EXERTS *THAT* MUCH FASCINATION... AND IT ALMOST *BLINDED* ME.

I ADMIT I ALMOST SUCCUMBED TO HER *DESPITE* THE FACT SHE'S A THIEF... DESPITE *EVERYTHING*.

BUT MY EYES WERE OPENED BY HER GAMBIT TO CHECKMATE BRUCE WAYNE, USING JASON TODD AS A *PAWN*.

SHE CLAIMS TO *LOVE* JASON AND PERHAPS IT'S *TRUE*.

HE'S A GOOD KID, EASY TO LOVE WITHIN DAYS OF KNOWING HIM.

BUT NOCTURNA WAS DETERMINED TO *USE* HIM BEFORE THEY'D EVEN *MET*.

THAT'S SOMETHING EVEN *LOVE* CAN'T OVER-LOOK AND I'LL NEVER FORGIVE--

BATMAN? CAN YOU HEAR ME--?

EH? MY BELT-RADIO?

YES, ROBIN! WHAT *IS* IT?

THIS *IS* IT, BATMAN! NIGHT-SLAYER KNOWS WHERE NOCTURNA *IS*-- AND HE'S GONNA *KILL* HER!

I TRIED TO *STOP* HIM, BUT HE... HE'S *NOT HUMAN*.

THE *SPEED* HE'S *CLIMBING*-- LIKE A *SPIDER*-- NO WAY I CAN *CATCH* HIM..!

DON'T EVEN TRY, ROBIN!

...BUT I'VE GOT AN IDEA-- GONNA GO UP TO THE MAINLAND CLIFF AND TRY SOMETHING -- BUT YOU'D BETTER COME, BATMAN!

ROBIN! LISTEN TO ME! DON'T--

HE CUT OFF.

IT SEEMS HE LOVES HER, BATMAN... JUST AS MUCH AS YOU DO.

I SAID DON'T--

YOU LIED, BATMAN.

NOT TO ME... TO YOURSELF.

I'M HURT, AND YOU FEEL RESPONSIBLE.

REMORSE MAKES YOU THINK YOU LOVE ME...

...AND WITH THAT THOUGHT IN YOUR MIND, YOU'RE CONVINCED THERE'S NO ROOM FOR NOCTURNA IN YOUR HEART.

I'M TELLING YOU, SELINA, THERE'S NO DOUBT IN MY MIND OR HEART.

I DO LOVE YOU.

MAYBE YOU DO.

I HOPE YOU DO, EVEN PRAY YOU DO...

...BUT WHAT LAW OF THE HEART SAYS YOU CAN'T LOVE TWO WOMEN, EVEN THREE OR FOUR? YOU'RE A COMPLEX, MANY-SIDED MAN...

AND I CAN'T LOVE SOMEONE WHO'S A THIEF, NO MATTER HOW MYSTERIOUS AND ALLURING--

ALL RIGHT, HAVE IT YOUR WAY.

DELUDE YOURSELF.

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

BUT IF YOU WON'T LEAVE MY BEDSIDE FOR *HER* SAKE, THEN DO IT FOR *ROBIN.*

THIS NIGHT-SLAYER IS *BAD BUSINESS,* BATMAN. AND HE'S CHOSEN HIS WEATHER *WELL.*

YES...YES, HE *HAS.*

THEN *MEET* HIM--*STOP* HIM!

THIS NIGHT WAS *MADE* FOR IT!

ALL RIGHT...BUT DON'T *YOU* LEAVE *ME,* SELINA.

PROMISE ME THAT.

I'M CATWOMAN, REMEMBER? --WITH ALL THE *LIVES* OF MY NAMESAKE.

YEAH.

SURE.

BUT AT LEAST IT *WORKED...*

NOW FOR THE *HARD* PART...

...GETTING *MYSELF* OUT OF HERE...

WEATHER'S STARTING TO *SCARE ME* AGAIN --FEELS LIKE THE END OF THE WORLD...

...BUT AT LEAST IT DOESN'T LEAVE *MUCH* ROOM FOR WORRYING ABOUT A MEASLY ACT OF *BURGLARY.*

SKASH

IT...IT'S HARDER THAN I THOUGHT...

FEEL LIKE A HEAVY LOAD THAT'S LASHED TOO LOOSE...

AND MY POOR COSTUME... RIPPED UP BY THAT LIGHTNING EVEN WORSE THAN I WAS...

EH?!

MISS KYLE! WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU DOING?!

GETTING OUT OF HERE.

BUT YOU'RE IN NO CONDITION TO--

--GO FOR A WALK IN THE LOVELY RED RAIN?

JUST WATCH ME, FLORENCE.

HERE, NOW, YOU DON'T WANT US TO RESTRAIN YOU, DO YOU?

NOPE... AND WHEN WILL I EVER LEARN THAT WHEN IT COMES TO AUTHORITY FIGURES--

--ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS.

UNFF!

OOPH!

NOW... I SAID I'M LEAVING.

ANYBODY ELSE WANT TO TRY STOPPING ME?

BING

I DIDN'T THINK SO.

NOW... IF I CAN JUST MAKE IT TO... THE AIRPORT...

BING

IT...IT'S TOO LATE FOR ME...

...PERHAPS TOO LATE FOR EVERYONE.

THE END IS ALREADY NEAR... AND COMING CLOSER...

NO AMOUNT OF STUDY OR RESEARCH CAN STOP WHATEVER IT IS THAT'S DESTROYING THE SKY...

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

NOTHING CAN STOP THE *DEATH OF THE NIGHT...*

NOTHING...

GOTHAM OBSER

NOTHING AT ALL...

I'VE *FOUND* YOU, NOCTURNA.

ANTON... NIGHT-SLAYER...

...AT LAST.

YOU *KILLED* OUR LOVE, NATALIA.

WHEN *YOU* STARTED KILLING *PEOPLE*, ANTON.

YOU MUST *PAY* FOR IT.

YES...

YOU MUST DIE.

YES... I KNOW.

GOT THIS IDEA FROM THE TERRORIST DARKWOLF...

AND ON THE MAINLAND CLIFF OPPOSITE THE OBSERVATORY...

NEVER REALIZED HOW FLIMSY A HANG-GLIDER IS...

... ESPECIALLY IN WIND LIKE THIS.

YOU DON'T CARE?

THERE IS NOTHING I CAN DO ABOUT THE APPROACHING CATACLYSM, ANTON... AND IF I CANNOT THWART THE DEATH OF THE *NIGHT*, THEN I MAY AS WELL DIE *MYSELF*.

WHY NOT AT THE HANDS OF THE *NIGHT-SLAYER*?

BUT DARKWOLF SURE AS HECK DIDN'T TRY *HIS* HANG-GLIDER STUNT IN A *RED TYPHOON!*

--AS IF BUFFETED BY THE SHOCKWAVE OF NIGHT-SLAYER'S ABRUPTLY EXPLODING WRATH.

YOU'VE BETRAYED ME, NATALIA--

--GIVEN YOUR LOVE TO SOMEONE ELSE!

AND HE IS IMMEDIATELY SWEPT UP AND AWAY FROM THE OBSERVATORY.

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

GOTTA FIGHT THE CONTROL...

- TRY TO CATCH A BOLT OF LIGHTNING BEFORE I MAKE YOU MINE!

— OR BLASTED BY THE RED LIGHTNING

"YOU'RE HARDER, AMION — YOU MURDERED THE LOVE WE ONCE SHARED

NO MORE OF FRIEND OR LOVER

THE NEXT BOLT SIZZLES WITHIN FEET OF THE MAN.

"CAN' I FIN FEEL IT... ONE'

SMASH

.. AND AGGRO STRIKES TO MENDR

FAR TOO CLOSE

- REACH THE CRYSTALS.

THIS IS AS CLOSE AS EVER GET/

BAM!

WE ARE THE LAST DEFENDERS OF EARTH!

YOU--!

ROBIN!

THUMP

¡PUM!

BWAK!

B-BATMAN GOTTA H-HELP

NATALIA!

YEAH... GOTTA GET HER AWAY, . INTO THE NEXT ROOM

YOUR BALLOON, NATALIA -- AND ANOTHER APERTURE IN THE CEILING IN HERE

LISTEN -- THE BATMAN'S HURT NOW, TOO, AND I'M NOT SURE EVEN HE CAN STOP NIGHT-SLAYER -- SO I'VE GOTTA GET YOU OUT OF HERE, UNDERSTAND?

EXIT THE BAT, ARE HE CAN SAVE NOTHING

MEANWHILE...

EASY, NATALIA.

IT'S ALMOST INFLATED NOW.

LOSING TOO MUCH BLOOD.

BUT HE'S STILL FIGHTING LIKE A MANIAC!

IT'S JUST A--IT FEARD NATALIA

AS SOON AS I GET THE CEILING APERTURE OPENED, I'LL CAST YOU OFF.

THINK OF THE [illegible] HE RECALLS HOW [illegible] THE HANG-GLIDER... AND YET, THERE IS NO OTHER WAY.

THE STILETTO IS RED CRIMSON BUT THE NIGHT -- EVEN A GASHED AND BLEEDING ONE -- IN HER ELEMENT, FOR BETTER OR WORSE.

MADMAN

AND BESIDES-- THIS MADMAN WAS GIVING ME A BAD NAME!

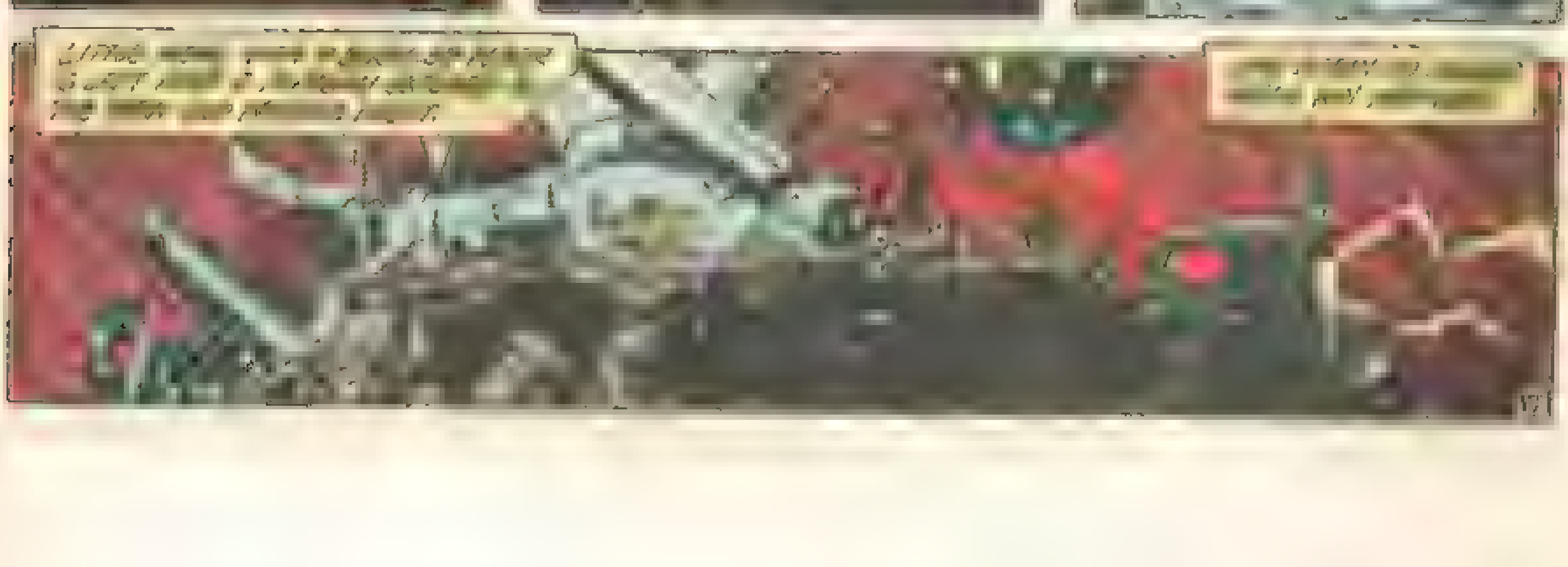
BATMAN--?

NOT A CHANCE, FRIEND

AFTER KNOWING YOUR LOVE--AFTER FEELING IT FOR THE RARE THING IT IS--HOW CAN I LET NOCTURNA BE DEPRIVED OF IT?

BATMAN
DEATH

BATMAN



G-GOOD B... NATALIA

AND I HOPE I GOW I SEE YOU SOON

NOT TOO SOON ANYWAY.

THE BATTLE RAGES

SELINA'S IN NO CONDITION TO HANDLE HIM

...AND IN MY SHAPE, I MAY NEVER EVEN REACH THEM, LET ALONE IN TIME

WAIT! THAT LEVER-- LOCKING THE POSITION OF THE GIANT TELESCOPE.

BUT I CAN'T EVEN REACH THAT IN TIME

CLICK

...UNLESS--

IT'S NO USE... THE ANGLE'S ALL WRONG...

...AND I'VE SIMPLY LOST TOO MUCH STRENGTH!

THE BLOCK BALLOON IS FINALLY SWALLOWED FROM SIGHT, AND ROBIN TURNS AWAY FROM HIS REVERIE

GOT TO DO IT! GOT TO CAUSE A DISTRACTION BEFORE SELINA IS KILLED

[illegible] CAT!!

[illegible]

THE TELESCOPE, CATWOMAN MOVE"

THE COLLAPSING TELESCOPE CLIPS NIGHT-SLAYER ACROSS THE BASE OF HIS SKULL.

HE STUMBLES DRUNKENLY FORWARD... AND CATWOMAN DOES MOVE...

WAK!

...HURLING HERSELF AT HIS ANKLES.

IT IS HER OWN UNDOING.

NOOOOO

AND NOW THE BIG EARTHQUAKE STRIKES-- DISMANTLING THE PRECARIOUS TOWER FROM THE BOTTOM UP.

DON'T GIVE UP, BATMAN!

WHEN WE HIT THE RIVER, WE'VE GOTTA SWIM!

YOU HEAR ME, BATMAN?!

DON'T GIVE UP!!

YOU'VE GOTTA FIGHT, BATMAN! THE JLA AND THE OUTSIDERS NEED YOU!

THE WORLD MAY NEED YOU!!

AND WHETHER SPLURGED BY ROBIN OR BRACED BY THE FRIGID WATERS--

--HE SOMEHOW FINDS THE STRENGTH.

WE...WE MADE IT, BATMAN... WE'RE STILL ALIVE.

YES...BUT WH-WHAT ABOUT--

--SELINA?

OH, NO... OH, GOD, NO...

EASY, BATMAN... EASY.

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CONCLUDED ON 21ST PAGE FOLLOWING

WHATEVER YOU ARE UP THERE, YOU WON'T WIN--DO YOU HEAR?!

I'LL FIGHT YOU UNTIL EVERY LAST DROP OF MY BLOOD HAS--

E-EASY ON THE EARS, FRIEND...

EH?

I WARNED YOU I WOULDN'T STOP MY MANHUNT--AND WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG? THOUGHT I'D HAVE TO DRAG THIS MADMAN IN BY MYSELF...

CATWOMAN!

THEN ALL IS SILENT SAVE FOR THE CRACK OF THUNDER AND HOWL OF WIND, AS ROBIN TURNS AWAY, STARING PAST THE STUB OF WHAT WAS ONCE A HIGH TOWER CLOSE TO THE NIGHTED HEAVENS...

NOCTURNA...?

GONE, CATWOMAN...

"... GONE WHERE WE MAY NEVER SEE HER AGAIN."

DEFLATED LONG MINUTES PAST, THE BALLOON NEVERTHELESS REMAINS ALOFT, BORNE BY HURRICANE WINDS INTO THE VERY HEART OF THE "FRAYING EFFECT"...

...AS THE WORLD ITSELF IS WRAPPED EVER MORE TIGHTLY IN A CRIMSON CLOAK OF DOOM.

I'M SORRY FOR YOU, BATMAN...

..SO SORRY... FOR BOTH OF YOU...

IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF DETECTIVE COMICS: THE CRISIS REACHES EARTH! AND IN THE NEXT BATMAN, A NIGHT ON THE TOWN SPELLS **TROUBLE!**

AN HOUR LATER...

DID YOU CATCH HIM, KATIA?

I CAME CLOSE TO CATCHING HIS BAYONET-- BUT, NO, HE GOT AWAY.

ANYWAY, IT'S OVER.

IS IT, BATMAN?

I DON'T LIKE IT ANY MORE THAN YOU DO...

I'VE COME A LONG WAY TO DO NOTHING BUT TRIP UP THE KGB AND THE CIA.

I LIKE TO FINISH WHAT I START.

AND THAT IS PRECISELY WHAT WE MUST DO.

I SAID IT'S OVER, KATIA.

THE DARK RIDER WAS DUPED FROM THE START, AND THE PLUTONIUM IS OUT OF CIRCULATION.

THAT MYSTERIOUS MAN ON THE MOUNTAIN IS CIA--

--AND A VERY TOUGH CUSTOMER.

--TOUGH ENOUGH.

NOT NEARLY--

THE BATMAN IS SUDDENLY THIRSTY, AND HIS BLOOD CHILLS... LIKE MELTED SNOW IN THE STREETS.

NOW IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO PLAY THE HOST, AND FOR ME TO BECOME THE STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND.

DARK RIDER HAS TAKEN THE STATUE, BATMAN... AND HE IS BOUND FOR GOTHAM!

CONCLUDED IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF BATMAN.